

the re-connection

Special Sections: Membership

NATALIE NARDONE, CMP • Nardone Consulting Group Inc.

In the last issue of *BreakOut*, members of the Georgia Chapter of Meeting Professionals International (GaMPI) heard about the strides being made by the Ambassador Committee. Ambassadors are paired with new members for their first year of membership. The purpose is to assist the new member in making connections and strides in achieving their personal and professional goals through all GaMPI has to offer.

As a member of this committee, I have to admit I've enjoyed my committee work, reaching out to new members to ensure they feel welcome and become more involved in the chapter. My return on my investment (ROI) spent volunteering in this capacity has been well worth the effort and time. Little did I know I was going to get more ROI than I ever imagined – to reconnect with a childhood friend!

I was assigned to Amber Dawson, a new student member, as her ambassador. Within just days of this assignment, I got an email from my high school's class president, requesting I assist another member of the class, an Amber Dawson, with planning our high school reunion. The lightbulb went on. Could this be Amber *Smith* that I remember all the way back to Ms. Sue's Little Mountain Preschool class? As you may have guessed by now, the answer is yes!

Amber and I reconnected by meeting to discuss reunion plans. The conversation quickly turned to the similarities between our career paths over the past ten years. Our conversation then turned to GaMPI. Of course, in typical Natalie-fashion, I launched into a lengthy explanation of the committee experiences I've had, as well as my ROI from obtaining my Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation. It was either the drinks we had that evening, or I had piqued her interest. Either way, she promised to look into volunteering further.

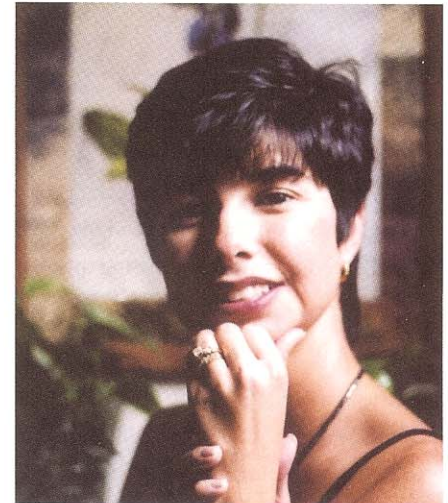
It proved to be genuine interest – Amber is already becoming involved.

Now, had you asked me what I wanted to get from my membership on the Ambassador Committee, I would have said "to meet new people and encourage them to get involved with GaMPI." Valid reason, right? Well, never did I imagine that I would reconnect with such a dear childhood friend through GaMPI. The irony certainly did not escape me.

Once again, I am left shaking my head in amazement at the influence GaMPI has had in my life.



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the new kid in class

AMBER S. DAWSON

Events by Amber

ABOUT THE NEW KID?

Let's face it, it's all about me! Joking aside, my name is Amber Dawson and I am a new student member of Meeting Professionals International (MPI). I was with the travel industry for almost eight years. In April 2004, GOGO Worldwide Vacations closed their Atlanta branch and I was out of a job. I went back to college to finish my Bachelor of Arts in Communications. I graduate this month; next year I begin my graduate program at Auburn University in hotel management.

NEW KID'S FIRST IMPRESSION

I felt like the new kid on the first day of school: a little unsure of myself and a bit nervous. To not risk being late and embarrassment on my first day of class, I managed to make it to GaMPI University (GaMPI U) an hour early.

I was greeted by the session's speaker, Carol Krugman, CMM, CMP. She immediately took me under her wing and told me all about the CMP program over a morning cup of tea. She was a wealth of knowledge on the industry, and immediately added to my interest in the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation. What an honor to get a one-on-one introduction to GaMPI U all to myself. What a great first impression!

Shortly before the morning class started, Vicki Penchosky, CMP, Co-Chair of the Member Care Committee, introduced herself and made me feel like part of the GaMPI family. She gave me her card and assured me that if I needed anything she would be glad to help.

The GaMPI U session was extremely informative. International meetings were something I had only touched on in my professional experience. Ms. Krugman was very effective as the session leader. She kept the group involved, which was good considering I was a bit spoiled from working from a home office and didn't know people still got together that early in the morning.

The afternoon luncheon was nice. What passion about the meeting industry! Natalie told me this, but I never in a million years anticipated the energy I experienced at the luncheon. I found the table-host concept and introductions during the luncheon to be a phenomenal idea. What better way to meet people than at your own table? My table was delightful and the food was great. A+ for my first GaMPI experience.

Natalie was right – I already feel a part of this organization. I am excited about future opportunities my membership will hold. In the future, my two goals are to get involved in GaMPI committee work, and work to obtaining my CMP designation. ☺

student & faculty members an investment in GaMPI and MPI's future

VICKI PENCHOSKY, CMP - Co-Chair, Member Care Committee • ConferenceDirect

This year's Member Care Committee is initiating a permanent plan for recruiting students and faculty at accredited institutions in the Atlanta area. Part of the Georgia Chapter of Meeting Professionals International's (GaMPI) strategic plan is addressing the long-term health and growth of MPI and GaMPI. This initiative recognizes the importance of showing students the relevance a professional organization like GaMPI has in their career plans.

There is no better time to show this relevance and provide them an opportunity to gain real life perspective than while they are studying it. By nurturing these students, we create future GaMPI members, business partners and future chapter leaders. We will be encouraging their participation in GaMPI activities at all levels and hope you will join us in welcoming them at our luncheons, events and onto our committees. Today's student may be tomorrow's president.

Georgia State's Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality offers BBA, MBA and Certificate in Hospitality Administration, and Gwinnett Technical College currently has 30 students enrolled in their Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management program. GaMPI will be sponsoring memberships in MPI for faculty in return for their support via course credit for encouraging and documenting students participation in GaMPI events and luncheons, serving on committees, and working behind the scenes at the Meeting Explorations Conference (MEC) and other GaMPI events.

Students qualify for membership when they are enrolled in a post-secondary academic program, emphasizing the meeting, hospitality, event and tourism related industries. Student dues are \$40 and once they become a GaMPI member, they can attend GaMPI luncheons for the reduced rate of \$18. Faculty memberships are available to those employed as faculty in the same academic programs. Faculty dues are \$195 and GaMPI is offering a limited number of Faculty Dues Scholarships to faculty who will assist in promoting the benefits of GaMPI in the classroom.

To launch this Student and Faculty Membership Initiative, the Member Care Committee is creating a sub-committee to work closely with these schools as a resource, provide information in classrooms, facilitate applications and guest lecture on the benefits of GaMPI in the development of their careers. That committee will not only be increasing our membership, but developing our future leaders!

All GaMPI members are encouraged to identify, recruit and enthusiastically welcome our student and faculty members. *It's about our future!* ☺



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Jane Riley, Dr. Mark Newton and Dave O'Connor; CHME, CMP
Students from Dr. Newton's Marketing Class, Gwinnett Technical College Hotel/Restaurant/Tourism Management Program